ANGELS CENTER OF HOPE

Anti-Harassment Policy

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ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Angels Center of Hope(ACOH) is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, inclusive, and professional environment free from harassment, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, and inappropriate conduct.

The organization believes that every individual has the right to be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect, regardless of their position, background, identity, or circumstances.

Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated within the organization's workplace, programs, activities, or other organizational engagements.

This policy establishes clear standards of conduct, reporting procedures, investigation processes, and accountability measures to prevent and address harassment.

All employees, board members, volunteers, interns, contractors, consultants, partners, and representatives are expected to comply with this policy.

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Prevent harassment, bullying, intimidation, and inappropriate behavior.
2. Promote a safe, respectful, and professional organizational environment.
3. Protect employees, volunteers, beneficiaries, partners, and community members from harassment.
4. Establish clear standards of acceptable and unacceptable conduct.
5. Provide accessible procedures for reporting harassment.
6. Ensure complaints are handled promptly, fairly, and confidentially to the extent reasonably possible.
7. Protect individuals who report harassment from retaliation.
8. Establish appropriate corrective and disciplinary measures.
9. Promote awareness, accountability, and respect throughout the organization.
10. Ensure compliance with applicable federal, Louisiana state, and local laws.

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This policy applies to:

- Board of Directors and governing body members.
- Executive Director and senior management.
- Full-time and part-time employees.
- Temporary and seasonal employees.
- Volunteers and interns.
- Contractors and consultants.
- Program officers and project coordinators.
- Donors and organizational representatives.
- Community partners and implementing organizations.
- Beneficiaries and program participants.
- Visitors and other individuals participating in organizational activities.

This policy applies to conduct occurring:

- At organizational offices and facilities.
- During meetings, workshops, and training sessions.
- At community outreach activities.
- During organizational travel and field assignments.
- At conferences, fundraising events, and social functions.
- Through emails, telephone calls, text messages, and social media.
- During remote work and virtual meetings.
- In other settings where conduct is connected to the organization's activities or working relationships.

4. DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT

Harassment refers to unwelcome conduct, behavior, communication, or actions that intimidate, offend, humiliate, threaten, or create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Harassment may be verbal, physical, visual, written, sexual, psychological, or electronic.

Under applicable federal and state laws, certain forms of harassment are unlawful when connected to protected characteristics or otherwise prohibited conduct.

The organization's internal standards may also prohibit inappropriate behavior that does not independently meet the legal definition of unlawful harassment.

5. TYPES OF HARASSMENT

5.1 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, inappropriate touching, sexually suggestive comments, gestures, images, or other verbal, physical, or electronic conduct of a sexual nature.

Examples include:

- Unwanted sexual advances.
- Requests for sexual favors.
- Unwelcome touching or physical contact.
- Sexually suggestive comments or jokes.
- Sharing inappropriate sexual images or materials.
- Repeated unwanted romantic or sexual attention.
- Threatening employment or organizational benefits based on sexual cooperation.
- Offering employment, promotions, or assistance in exchange for sexual favors.

Sexual harassment may occur between individuals of any sex or gender.

5.2 Verbal Harassment

Verbal harassment includes:

- Insults and offensive remarks.
- Threatening language.
- Humiliating comments.
- Repeated abusive or degrading language.
- Offensive jokes or name-calling.
- Derogatory statements concerning an individual's identity or background.

5.3 Physical Harassment

Physical harassment includes:

- Unwanted physical contact.
- Intimidating physical behavior.
- Aggressive gestures.
- Threatening movements.
- Deliberately obstructing someone's movement.
- Physical aggression or assault.

5.4 Discriminatory Harassment

Discriminatory harassment includes unwelcome conduct directed at an individual because of a protected characteristic, such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or another characteristic protected by applicable law.

Examples include:

- Racial insults or offensive stereotypes.
- Religious intimidation.
- Derogatory comments about disability.
- Sex-based humiliation.
- Offensive remarks about national origin.
- Harassment based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

5.5 Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying includes repeated or serious inappropriate behavior that intimidates, humiliates, undermines, or unfairly targets another person.

Examples include:

- Repeated public humiliation.
- Deliberate intimidation.
- Persistent personal insults.
- Unreasonable threats.
- Deliberate exclusion intended to humiliate.
- Abusive or threatening communications.

Reasonable performance management, constructive feedback, and legitimate supervisory decisions do not automatically constitute bullying or harassment.

5.6 Cyber Harassment and Online Misconduct

Cyber harassment includes inappropriate or abusive behavior through digital communication channels. Examples include:

- Harassing emails or text messages.
- Threatening social media messages.
- Sharing humiliating photographs without authorization.
- Online bullying.
- Repeated unwanted digital communication.
- Publishing personal information to intimidate someone.
- Sending inappropriate or sexually explicit content.

5.7 Third-Party Harassment

The organization also prohibits harassment by or against individuals who are not employees but interact with the organization.

This includes harassment involving donors, beneficiaries, contractors, visitors, service providers, community partners, and program participants.

The organization will take appropriate steps to address such conduct within its authority and legal responsibilities.

6. ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH

ACOH maintains a zero-tolerance approach toward harassment, sexual misconduct, intimidation, and retaliation.

All individuals associated with the organization are expected to maintain appropriate professional boundaries and treat others respectfully.

No individual shall be excused from compliance because of their seniority, authority, employment status, financial contribution, or relationship with the organization.

7. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

The following conduct is prohibited:

1. Unwelcome sexual advances or inappropriate touching.
2. Threatening or intimidating behavior.
3. Verbal abuse, insults, or degrading remarks.
4. Discriminatory jokes or offensive comments.
5. Bullying and repeated humiliation.
6. Unwanted sexual communications or messages.
7. Sharing inappropriate images or videos.
8. Threatening employment, volunteer opportunities, or assistance to obtain personal favors.
9. Deliberately creating a hostile or intimidating environment.
10. Harassing individuals through social media or electronic communications.
11. Retaliating against anyone who reports harassment.
12. Interfering with or discouraging legitimate investigations.
13. Knowingly allowing harassment to continue without taking appropriate action.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

- All employees, volunteers, and representatives are expected to:
- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Avoid offensive, discriminatory, or intimidating conduct.
- Respect individual differences and personal boundaries.
- Follow organizational codes of conduct.
- Report suspected harassment or inappropriate behavior.
- Cooperate with authorized investigations.
- Avoid retaliation against complainants or witnesses.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT

The Executive Director, supervisors, and management team shall:

1. Promote a respectful and harassment-free environment.
2. Communicate this policy to employees and volunteers.
3. Ensure appropriate reporting channels are available.
4. Take complaints seriously.
5. Respond promptly to reported concerns.
6. Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
7. Arrange impartial investigations.
8. Take appropriate corrective action.
9. Prevent retaliation against individuals reporting concerns.
10. Ensure employees receive appropriate training.

Supervisors who receive complaints or become aware of potential harassment must take appropriate action in accordance with this policy.

10. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Any individual who experiences, witnesses, or becomes aware of harassment is encouraged to report the concern.

Reports may be submitted to:

- The immediate supervisor.
- The Executive Director.
- The Human Resources Officer.
- The designated Anti-Harassment Officer.
- The Board Chairperson.
- Another designated independent organizational representative.

If the complaint involves the immediate supervisor, Executive Director, or designated reporting officer, the complainant may report directly to the Board Chairperson or another appropriate independent representative.

Complaints may be submitted verbally or in writing.

Individuals are encouraged to provide relevant details, including:

- Date and approximate time of the incident.
- Location of the incident.
- Description of the conduct.
- Individuals involved.
- Names of witnesses, if known.
- Available supporting documents or communications.

However, a complaint will not be dismissed simply because the individual cannot provide all these details.

11. COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

All complaints shall be reviewed seriously and handled fairly.

Upon receiving a complaint, the organization shall:

1. Acknowledge the complaint where contact information is available.
2. Assess whether immediate protective measures are necessary.
3. Document the complaint appropriately.
4. Assign an impartial investigator or qualified reviewer.
5. Conduct interviews with relevant individuals.
6. Review available documents and other evidence.
7. Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
8. Determine whether organizational policies have been violated.
9. Recommend appropriate corrective or disciplinary measures.
10. Document the outcome and actions taken.

Investigations shall be conducted objectively, without discrimination, bias, or unnecessary delay.

Where appropriate, the organization may engage an external investigator or employment attorney.

12. INTERIM PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Where necessary, the organization may implement temporary measures while a complaint is being reviewed.

Such measures may include:

- Separating the individuals involved.
- Adjusting work assignments or schedules.
- Restricting inappropriate contact.
- Providing temporary alternative supervision.
- Limiting access to certain organizational facilities or activities.
- Taking other reasonable steps to protect affected individuals.

Interim measures are precautionary and do not automatically establish that an allegation has been proven.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY

All harassment complaints and related information shall be handled sensitively and confidentially to the extent reasonably possible.

Information shall be shared only with individuals who need it for legitimate reporting, investigation, corrective action, or legal purposes.

The organization shall maintain appropriate records and protect the privacy of complainants, respondents, and witnesses.

Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where disclosure is necessary for a fair investigation or required by law.

14. PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION

Retaliation against any individual who reports harassment, participates in an investigation, or exercises a legally protected right is strictly prohibited.

Retaliation may include:

- Threats or intimidation.
- Unjustified termination.
- Demotion or suspension.
- Unfair changes in working conditions.
- Harassment or bullying.
- Exclusion from opportunities.
- Withdrawal of organizational assistance as punishment for reporting.
- Any other adverse action intended to discourage reporting or participation in an investigation.

Any individual found to have engaged in retaliation may face appropriate disciplinary action.

15. DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Any employee, volunteer, contractor, or representative found to have violated this policy may face appropriate corrective or disciplinary action.

Depending on the circumstances and seriousness of the conduct, measures may include:

- Counseling or additional training.
- Verbal or written warnings.
- Formal reprimands.
- Suspension from duties.
- Removal from organizational activities.
- Termination of employment or volunteer engagement.
- Termination of contractual or partnership arrangements.
- Referral to law enforcement or appropriate authorities where warranted.

Disciplinary decisions shall be based on the findings of an appropriate review and consistent with applicable law and organizational procedures.

16. FALSE OR MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS

The organization expects all complaints to be made honestly and in good faith.

Knowingly submitting fabricated allegations or deliberately providing false information during an investigation may result in appropriate disciplinary action.

However, a complaint that cannot be substantiated, or an allegation made in good faith that is not proven, shall not automatically be treated as a false or malicious complaint.

17. TRAINING AND AWARENESS

The organization shall provide appropriate anti-harassment training and awareness activities for employees, volunteers, supervisors, and managers.

Training may include:

- Understanding different forms of harassment.

- Recognizing sexual harassment.
- Preventing workplace bullying.
- Maintaining professional boundaries.
- Respectful workplace communication.
- Reporting and complaint procedures.
- Preventing retaliation.
- Understanding supervisory responsibilities.
- Promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion.

Additional training shall be provided where necessary based on organizational needs and applicable legal requirements.

18. EXTERNAL REPORTING AND LEGAL RIGHTS

Nothing in this policy prevents any individual from reporting harassment or discrimination to an appropriate government agency or seeking legal advice.

Individuals may contact:

1. U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
   Website: https://www.eeoc.gov/
   Telephone: 1-800-669-4000
2. Louisiana Commission on Human Rights (LCHR)
   Website: https://gov.louisiana.gov/page/lchr

Individuals may also contact law enforcement when conduct involves threats, assault, stalking, or other potentially criminal behavior.

Internal reporting is not a prerequisite to contacting an appropriate government agency.

19. COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS

This policy shall be implemented in accordance with applicable federal, Louisiana state, and local laws, including, where applicable:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1991.
- The Equal Employment Opportunity provisions of applicable federal law.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended.
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act.
- The Pregnancy Discrimination Act.
- The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.
- Louisiana Employment Discrimination Law, Louisiana Revised Statutes §23:301 et seq.
- Louisiana Revised Statutes §23:332.
- Other applicable federal and state laws relating to workplace discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Where applicable law provides greater protection or imposes additional obligations, the law shall prevail.

20. POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Board of Directors and Executive Leadership shall oversee implementation of this policy.
The organization shall review this policy at least annually or whenever significant changes occur in applicable laws, organizational operations, or workplace practices.
Employees and volunteers shall be informed of any material changes.

21. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

ACOH is committed to maintaining an environment where every individual can work, volunteer, participate, and engage with the organization without fear of harassment, discrimination, intimidation, or retaliation.

We recognize that a respectful environment strengthens organizational performance, protects individual dignity, promotes accountability, and supports our charitable mission.

All employees, board members, volunteers, contractors, partners, and representatives are expected to uphold this policy.

22. BOARD APPROVAL AND ADOPTION

This Anti-Harassment Policy has been reviewed and adopted by the Board of Directors of Angels Center of Hope.

Approved by: ACOH Board of Directors

Date of Approval: January 8,2025